

## [I am a shoe laster for 54 years]

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Assignment: Living Lore—The Shoe Laster of Lynn

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Section #1

"I am a show shoe laster for 54 years. That's a long tame (time) all right.

" I It wuz in County o' Marghs, near the same spot where St. Patrick built his first church there I wuz born. Jest about eight males (miles) from there, it wuz, jest about eight males from where the Bishop of all Ireland an' the Cardinal a o' Marghe is.

"But I growed up in County Monchan Monohan 'cause whin my three sisters and me wuz still little, my father daied (died) from the kick of a horse. That put us on the bum so we wint ta live with my mother's five brothers. They wusn't married an' they owned the firm (farm) in County Monohan that usta be my mother's father's. Mass. 1938-9

"My father wuz a horse trader. He liked horses an' he'd fed 'em good with mangels (something like a beat beet ) fir that would make thim look shainy (shiny) laike (like) a mouse. Sometames thin, ya could sell 'em ta the English soldies soldiers . That way ya'd get a good price fir 'em.

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"But I don't remimber much about my father 'cause I wuz jest a little fella whin he daied. I don't remimber the great potato famine either 'cause that wuz befor I wuz born.

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But I often hierd tell of it. A lotta people daied in that a dysentery. The Potatoes potatoes all rot, ya know, an' there wuzn't much a inything atall ta eat. There wuz some corn meal sint over from the states an' I guess it musta bin moldy or somethin'. It wuz niver taisted before in Ireland, but it's good enough food if its all raight (right). Only this made the people worse. A lotta thim daied.

"I worked hard on my uncle's firm when I wuz a kid. Two thengs I reember remember often an' that wuz the cuttin' a the turf, an' aworkin' in flaw flax tame.

"Turf, ya see, is that most people birnt (burnt) in Ireland, 'stead a wood or coal. In the sprang tame the hull family 'ould start diggin' fir it.

"Sometames underneath the ground we'd see parta what had bin an oak tree. An' down eight er ten feet where the blue clay wuz, we'd get the good stuff. It wuz soft an' slippery laiike soap with oil on it and ya could out cut it out like a brick. Ah! but the blue clay wuz good ta see.

"After it wuz dug we would lay it out in rows ta dry. If 'twas a rainy sason, (season), it sure would be bad luck 'cause thin it wun't dry. Bad day fir the folks in Ireland in a rainy spell when ya could not dry the turf.

"The sun would shrink it up some, and then ya would heap it up some in little chunks. Then whin it wuz rale (real) dry, it would be heaped up near the house, sometames as big as a small house itself. We'd put straw over that sa it 'ould not get wet.

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"It 'ould be stacked so it 'ould come up ta a point on the top. When we started ta birn it, we'd take it from the bottom, an' every tame ya' take a piece out, another 'ould roll down.

"Sometames too, paople 'ould make turf outa bog mud. Wuzn't as good as that got near the blue clay but it burned good jest the same.

"Turf kept the houses warm an' it wuz used fir cookin' too, on the hirth (hearth). There'd be a big crane scross across the top a the hirth ta hang the pots on, an' in the bottom my mother'd put her bake oven. Din't she bake the good cakes an' bread in that? I remimber how good they usta taist at Christmas. An' I kin see her as she usta pile the turf aroun' the oven. Ah! that turf that wuz dug from the blue clay bed! It 'ould birn (burn) like the dickens.

"The cookin' in this country is good, but I taint nothin' laike my mother usta make in Ireland. The ta ( time tea ) taisted sa good. It wuz black ta, an' always cost three shillin's a pound. An' with cream raight from the chirn (churn) in it! An' thin after ya'd drunk it, there 'ould be the tossin' a the cups ta see ya fortune.

"An' I kin still taist the buttermilk pottage my mother usta make. It wuz meal cooked in buttermilk. Oh! Boy, it wuz nice. An' the rice cooked in new milk with fraish (fresh) butter in it.

" An An' the potatoes with the skins on. That's the best way ta eat potatoes. Not peeled, laike they do in America.

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"An' Irish bacon! Ya cain't beat Irish bacon.

"That's 'cause in Ireland the pigs is fed right an' they ain't left ta roam about. There they get potatoes an' meal an' mangels till they get shainy (shiny) laike a mouse same as my father's horses usta get.

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"An' they put rangs (rings) in their noses too so they cain't root. A pig's a dirty animal if ya don't watch him. But in Ireland they watch him. He ain't fed on swill there , . An' it shows it in the bacon. That's why it's sa swate (sweet) laike an' good taistin'.

"An Irish oat meal! Ya kin buy that at Bloods ( a Lynn market) That's the rale theng. That's 'cause the oats germ same as the wheat germ fills out sa slowly in Ireland. The climate is right fir it there. Here the grain is burned up, an so it's little whin ya harvest it.

"But if you're a boy in Ireland ya pay fir the butter, ya eat. Oftin ya havta chirn it. There wuz thim chirns with the dasher in it, ya'd pull up an' down. Sometimes ya'd havta blister ya hands fore ya'd get done. Fir it mighta take ya an hour if the butter din't come soon. It wuz accordin' ta the weather how long it 'ould take.

"A course the rich people 'ould have a chirnin' machaine an' hitch it to a horse. He'd go roun' an' I roun' ' till the butter'd come. I see that done a coupla tames.

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"As I said bafore, I oftin hadda work in flax tame too. Sometimes the neighbors 'ould come ta help too, an' that's the way they did in turf cuttin' tame. Then we'd take a tirn ta help thim.

" [Fla?] Flax harvest wuz hard work. It hadda be pulled an' tied up and an' thin the seeds beat out. Thin it 'ould be buried in stale water fir eight or ten days. Oh! Boy, din't it stink?

"A body that knowed flax could always tell whin it wuz ready ta come out. Then a man 'ould havta wade in [this?] flax holes up ta his waist and hoist it out. Wun't they be chilled whin they come out though? A mean job, ta hoist flax from a flax hole!

"After that we'd take the bands off it an' spread it on the grass ta dry. Sometimes the rain 'ould come an' that 'ould be good fir it, fir it ' ould clane (clean) it off some.

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"We'd leave it in the fields ta dry fir about a week and thin stack it. After that it 'ould be taken ta the flax mill an' thin sold ta the linen mills at Belfast.